

Female Long-Term Inmates: Assessment Considerations & Experiences of Lifers Released by the Board



Board of Parole Hearings

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Jana Larmer, Psy.D.

Forensic Psychologist

Board of Parole Hearings/
Forensic Assessment Division

Bureau of Justice Statistics (2015)

Sentenced Federal and State Prison Population



- By the end of 2015 there were an estimated 1,526,800 prisoners.
 - ✦ More than a two percent decrease from the prior year
 - ✦ This was the smallest US prison population since 2005
- Just over seven percent (104,968) were females
 - ✦ African American women are disproportionately represented in the prison population.
 - Although there were twice as many white females (52, 700) as African American females (21,700); the imprisonment rate for African American women (103 per 100,000) was twice the rate for white women (52 per 100,000).

Female Inmates in State Prisons



- More than a third (36%) of female offenders were violent* offenders.
- Twenty-eight percent were sentenced for property offences
- Twenty-five percent were sentenced for drug offences.

*Offenses involving physical harm

Inmates in CDCR



- At the end of December 2016:
 - 129,416 total inmates
 - Men: 123,540
 - Lifers: 26,461
 - Women: 5,876 (approx. 5%)
 - Lifers: 1,070

Women and Violent crime: Crime Characteristics



- Violence committed by women tends to be less severe and less often results in significant injury.
- Most homicides occur in a domestic setting.
- Most assaults in private settings.
- Tend to use weapons less often, but when they do it is most often defensive. Guns and knives are used most often.
- Majority of victims were under the influence of drugs or alcohol.
- Majority of violent crimes are emotionally motivated and impulsive.

Women and Violent Crime: Victim Characteristics



- Women typically know their victims.
- More often they are men, but when they are women the majority are friends or acquaintances.
- Usually a single victim.
- Typically of the same ethnicity.

Codefendants and Stranger Victims



- Women are more likely to be involved in drug and violent offenses when they had male codefendants.
- Robbery stands out as the one type of violent crime where most of the victims were strangers to the offender.
- “Of Robberies that resulted in homicide, most occur in the context of acquiring money to support drug use, with a codefendant who is often a male intimate partner, and where the woman is an accomplice in a robbery which culminates in the victim’s death (Langley, 2002; Schwartz, 2008).”

Commonly Accepted Risk Factors for Recidivism



- Andrews and Bonta (2010) described the “Central Eight” factors for recidivism. The research is male-dominated, and has been useful, but it is not entirely clear how these factors generalize to women.

The Big Four:

Causal risk factors that predict criminal recidivism



- ✦ History of antisocial behavior/criminal history
- ✦ Antisocial Personality Pattern
- ✦ Antisocial Cognition/criminal thinking
- ✦ Antisocial Associates/criminal peers

Moderate Four:

Additional but weaker impact on predictive validity for recidivism



- ✦ Family/marital Circumstances
- ✦ School/Work failure (low social capital)
- ✦ Leisure/recreation—criminal opportunity/high risk lifestyle
- ✦ Substance Abuse/Promiscuity



Women's Pathways to Crime

While there are some similarities, research suggests that pathways to crime differ for men and women.

Research into women's pathways to crime began during the early 1990's and continues to be developed and refined.

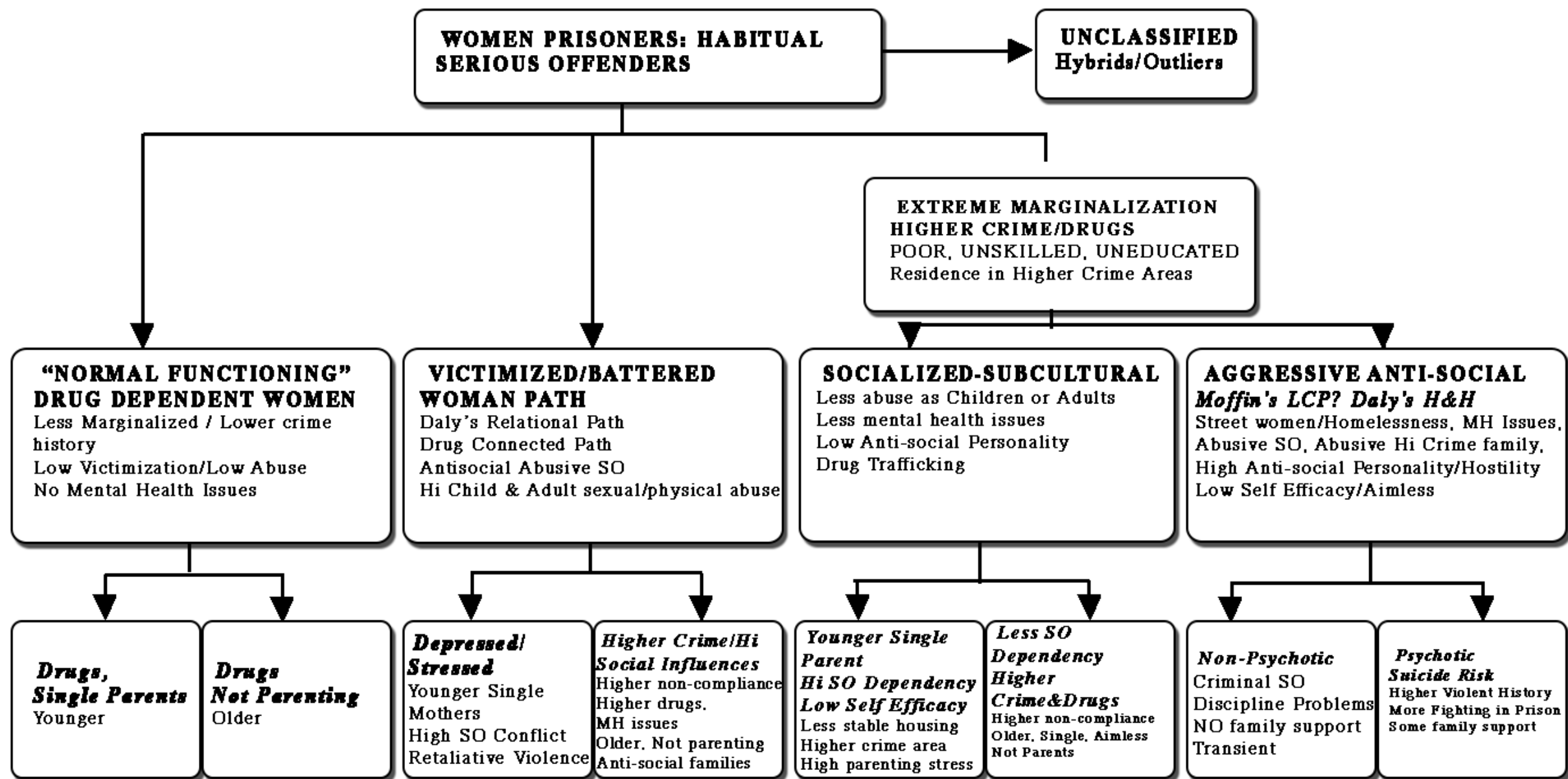
- Salisbury and Van Voorhis (2009), study of probationers found three pathways
- Brennan et al. (2012), study of soon-to-be released inmates from CCWF and VSPW found eight pathways which coalesced into four superordinate pathways

Salisbury and Van Voorhis (2009)

Gendered Pathways



- Child Abuse Pathway
Includes childhood victimization; impacting mental illness, and substance abuse due to self-medicating
- Relational Pathway
Dysfunctional intimate relationships contributing to low self-efficacy and greater likelihood of adult victimization leading to depression/anxiety and substance abuse
- Social and Human Capitalization Pathway
The impact of social relationships upon self-efficacy, educational and employment achievement



Factors that Differentiate Women's Pathways



- Parenting problems
- Lifelong victimization and abuse
- Mental health/depression
- Poor family support
- Criminal and drug history
- Pessimism/low self-efficacy
- Conflicted significant other relations
- Low social/human capital (social networks that create opportunity and support/self-efficacy)

Specific Risk Factors for Violent Female Offenders



- Higher incidence of physical and sexual trauma, and revictimization.
 - ✦ Lifetime frequency of physical abuse was a significant predictor of self-reported violent behavior
- Female homicide offenders experience higher levels of stress, earlier in life, than do male murderers.
- Dysfunctional relationships (includes intimate and family relationships)/Parenting stress
- Mental Illness and Personality Disorders
- Substance abuse
- Low self-esteem/self-efficacy

Considering Institutional Adjustment



- Interpersonal and affective factors/characteristics may be more predictive of institutional violence.
- Affective and behavioral instability are particularly relevant
 - Impulsivity
 - ✦ Institutional misconduct
 - ✦ Substance abuse
- Mental illness: Treatment and Insight as mediators
- Relationships (family, friends, peers, work, SO)
- Programming/self-help
- Education/vocational training

Analysis of Comprehensive Risk Assessments Administered in 2016

Gender Comparisons



	Female Long-Term Inmates	Male Long-Term Inmates
	N=150 (4.7%)	N=3000 (95.2%)
Low Risk	46%	27%
Moderate Risk	45%	49%
High Risk	9%	24%

Gender Comparisons: PCL-R



	Female Long-Term Inmates	Male Long-Term Inmates
PCL-R Total	13.6	18.5
PCL-R Interpersonal	1.8	2.7
PCL-R Affective	3.2	4.3
PCL-R Lifestyle	4.5	5.1
PCL-R Antisocial	3.2	5.3

Gender Comparisons: HCR-20-V3



- Generally speaking, women were assessed to have fewer risks than men and when risks were found to be present they tended to have less current relevance for women. But there were some meaningful gender-based differences across specific risk items.

Gender Comparisons: History of Problems With...



- Women less likely (and men more likely) assessed to have a history of problems with other antisocial behavior, personality disorder, violent attitudes, and unfavorable response to correctional or therapeutic interventions.
- Women more likely assessed to have a history of problems with major mental disorder and traumatic experiences.

Gender Comparisons: Recent Problems With...



- Women less likely (and men more likely) assessed to have recent problems with insight into one's violence risk.
- Women slightly more likely assessed to have recent problems with symptoms of major mental disorder – but this risk is fairly uncommon in both female and male long-term inmates.

Gender Comparisons: Future Problems With...



- Women less likely (and men more likely) assessed to have future problems with planning for and utilizing professional services, their living situation, and treatment/supervision compliance and responsiveness.

Women on Parole

• Challenges

- ✦ Financial/Employment issues
- ✦ Education
- ✦ Friends
- ✦ Housing safety
- ✦ Depression/anxiety
- ✦ Anger/hostility
- ✦ Substance Abuse
- ✦ Parental Stress

• Desistence and resiliency

- ✦ Educational assets
- ✦ Self-Esteem/Empowerment
- ✦ Family Support

Lifer Parolees I Spoke With Said...



They were very surprised by the challenges.

- Housing
- Employment/Education
- Technology

Another Surprise



The impact of various relationships

- Family
- Community
- Parolees

Final Impressions



- There was a strong sense of responsibility among lifer parolees, not just to themselves and to the community, but especially to other lifers who are still in prison.
- Incredible resilience and strength that lifer parolees draw upon to navigate these challenges.